



## CERTIFICATION GUIDE



NATIONAL CUSTOMER SUPPORT CENTER  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE  
6060 PRIMACY PKWY STE 201  
MEMPHIS TN 38188-0001

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## Purpose

This document outlines the certification process for qualification to use the Line of Travel (LOT) product. LOT-sorted addresses are placed in the line of travel order. Use of a LOT sequencing process is a mail preparation and sorting requirement, but LOT certification is optional.

## Introduction

The LOT product permits mailers to sort address lists in line of travel order to comply with the carrier route sequencing standards resulting from Classification Reform. Before processing address lists against the LOT product, all addresses must contain a valid ZIP+4 and Delivery Point Code (DPC) assigned by CASS-certified ZIP+4 address-matching software. For LOT processing, the carrier route must be assigned using the LOT product. Addresses that have not been or cannot be correctly matched and ZIP+4 coded by a CASS-certified ZIP+4 address matching software product may not be processed against the LOT file.

The LOT file contains ZIP+4 Codes, carrier route indicators, LOT sequence numbers, and ascending/descending codes. The LOT sequence number indicates the delivery order made to the ZIP+4 add-on code within a carrier-route. The ascending/descending code indicates that delivery is made to the delivery points within the line of travel sequence number in either ascending or descending order by DPC.

LOT certification is an optional United States Postal Service (USPS) program designed to evaluate software's ability to assign the correct carrier route ID, LOT sequence number, and ascending/descending code for any valid ZIP+4 code to qualify for applicable carrier route postal rates. Carrier route information must be updated within 90 days of the date of the mailing. LOT certification is administered by the US Postal Service's National Customer Support Center (NCSC).

## Overview

The certification process consists of two parts: Stage I, which is optional; and Stage II, which is required. Stage I test files may be ordered using the LOT certification order form or they may be downloaded electronically from the Rapid Information Bulletin Board System (RIBBS). For further information on the availability and many uses of RIBBS, call 1-800-238-3150. Stage II test files must be requested using the same LOT certification order form. (See Ordering LOT Certification on page ??.)

## Stage I Overview

Stage I is a self test designed to assist in evaluating and diagnosing the performance of LOT processing software when applied to a test address file. Results can be evaluated after the test file has been processed and compared to the Stage I. This evaluation will assist in software debugging prior to Stage II processing. *Stage I files will always contain sequencing information. The results of Stage I processing are not evaluated by the NCSC and do not result in certification.*

## Stage II Overview

Stage II evaluates the performance of LOT processing software. Stage II files are supplied and graded by the National Customer Support Center, and they must be processed with company owned or leased software and hardware, which must achieve the required level of accuracy to attain LOT certification.

Once achieved, LOT certification is valid until the end of each annual certification period, which begins July 15 of one year and runs through July 14 of the following year. To remain LOT certified for each annual period, applications must be sent to the NCSC and certification must be awarded.

## Certification Overview

To provide the mailing industry with a method whereby a software manufacturer's LOT certification can function as a *blanket* certification for all users of a particular LOT software package, the NCSC offers a manufacturer certification process. Through this process, the requirement for each user of LOT-certified software to attain individual user certification is only necessary in limited situations.

**Note:** *Manufacturer certification is available only to software manufacturers (i.e., companies that actually develop software). All user modifications (i.e., drivers) must be certified separately.*

To attain manufacturer certification, order the LOT Stage II file and check the manufacturer certification box on the front of the order form to ensure that your company will be listed as a manufacturer in postal documents. If the product to be certified has optional processing parameters that affect LOT processing, a printed statement of the parameters to be used in processing the Stage II file must be attached to the signed LOT order form. The same version of LOT software may be certified under various configurations. A configuration is indicated by a three-character alphabetic identifier associated with a software name and version and represents a specific set of parameter settings. The configuration to be certified must be indicated on the order form.

If vendors, service bureaus, or mailers have a special need to use a LOT product in a configuration that has not been LOT certified, they must apply for user-defined certification. A service bureau or mailer who wants to become LOT certified and is using LOT software in a configuration that has been manufacturer certified must apply for user-defined certification. Check the User Defined box on the LOT order form and specify the exact configuration used for manufacturer certification.

Contact the LOT software manufacturer for more information concerning manufacturer-certified configurations and parameters.

**Note:** *Certificates issued will be differentiated by a manufacturer-certified statement on the certificate. The certificate format is subject to change without notice.*

## Technical Information

### Media Configurations

LOT Stages I and II files are available in four non-labeled tape formats, one cartridge format, and two diskette formats.

### Tape and Cartridge Configurations

Format	Recording Technique	Character Set	Density	Label Options
A	9-track	EBCDIC	6250	No Labels
B	9-track	ASCII	6250	No Labels
C	9-track	EBCDIC	1600	No Labels
D	9-track	ASCII	1600	No Labels
E	Cartridge	IBM 3480	38K	No Labels

Attributes			
Record Length	=	100 Characters	
Block Size	=	15000 Characters	
Records per Block	=	150 Records	

### Diskette Configuration Options

Format	Disk Type	Density
F	5 1/4	DSHD 1.2 MB
G	3 1/2	DSHD 1.4 MB

Attributes			
Record Length	=	100 Characters	
Maximum Records per Disk	=	25000	

**Note:** Diskettes are provided in ASCII format with a fixed field and record length. Each record is terminated by a carriage return and line feed. All diskettes are compressed using the PKZIP utility.

## Stage File Description

### Copyright Header Record

The first record on the LOT Stages I and II test files is a copyright record consisting of FILE-DATE, COPYRIGHT-SYMBOL, SEQUENCE-NUMBER, CUSTOMER-ID, and PRODUCT-ID fields. The components are illustrated in the table below.

Field Sequence Number	Field Description	Relative Logical Length	Position From/Thru	Content Notes
1	Filler	03	001 003	Spaces
2	File-Version-Month	02	004 005	01-31
3	File-Version-Day	02	006 007	00-99
4	File-Version-Year	02	008 009	01-12
5	Copyright-Symbol	07	010 016	(C)USPS
6	Filler	04	017 020	Spaces
7	Sequence-Number	03	021 023	001-255
8	Customer-ID	09	024 032	NNNNNAAXX*
9	Product-ID	11	033 043	See below**
10	Filler	57	044 100	Spaces

\* N = Numeric (0-9)  
 A = Alphabetic (A-Z)  
 X = Alphanumeric (A-Z, 0-9)

\*\* LOT Stage I  
 LOT Stage II

**Test Address Record**

The test address records in the Stage I and II files contain elements applicable to one of three groups: miscellaneous elements, answer elements, or input elements comprising the actual test address records.

<b>Field Sequence Number</b>	<b>Field Description</b>	<b>Relative Logical Length</b>	<b>Position From/Thru</b>
1	Customer-ID	09	001 009
2	ZIP-Code-Input	05	010 014
3	ZIP+4-Input	04	015 018
4	Delivery-Point-Input	02	019 020
5	Check Digit Input	01	021 021
6	Filler	54	022 075
7	Sequence-Number-Answer	04	076 079
8	Ascend-Descend-Code-Answer	01	080 080
9	Carrier-Route-Answer	04	081 084
10	Filler	16	085 100
<b>Record Length:</b> 100 Characters			
<b>Block Size:</b> 15000 Characters			

## Data Element Definitions

### ASCENDING-DESCENDING-CODE-ANSWER

The LOT Stage I file contains the valid ascending or descending code in this field. In the LOT Stage II file, this field is left blank. LOT software must move the corresponding ascending or descending code in the answer field.

**COBOL Picture:**

X(01)

**Possible Values:**

A or D

### CARRIER-ROUTE-ANSWER

The LOT Stage I file contains the valid carrier route code in this field. In the LOT Stage II file, this field is blank. Customer software must place the assigned carrier route code in this field.

**COBOL Picture:**

X(04)

**Possible Values:**

Alphanumeric

**Comments:**

Customers seeking LOT certification must place the correct carrier-route code in the CARRIER-ROUTE-ANSWER field. The CARRIER-ROUTE-ANSWER must be returned exactly as it appears on the LOT file. *If software is unable to determine the CARRIER-ROUTE-ANSWER, the record should be placed at the top of the file.*

**Example:**

C001 R002 H003 B004 G005

### CHECK-DIGIT-INPUT

The DELIVERY-POINT-BARCODE-CHECK-DIGIT field contains the correction character for the 11-digit DPBC.

**COBOL Picture:**

X(01)

**Possible Values:**

0 through 9



## **CUSTOMER-ID**

The CUSTOMER-ID field contains the customer identification number in the CASS system for stage files. This customer identifier is assigned by the CASS Department and should be used for all correspondence with the US Postal Service concerning LOT certification.

### **COBOL Picture:**

X(09)

### **Possible Values:**

Alphanumeric

### **Example:**

01001NAAB

## **DELIVERY-POINT-INPUT**

The delivery point contains the last two digits of the house/box number representing the delivery point information needed to form the 11-digit or delivery point barcode (DPBC).

### **COBOL Picture:**

X(02)

### **Possible Values:**

00 through 99 or spaces

### **Examples:**

06 90 99

## **SEQUENCE-NUMBER-ANSWER**

The LOT Stage I file contains valid sequence numbers in this field. In the LOT Stage II file, this field is left blank. For testing purposes only, customer software must move the assigned sequence number to this field.

### **COBOL Picture:**

X(04)

### **Possible Values:**

0000 through 9999 or spaces

## **ZIP-Code-Input**

The ZIP-CODE-INPUT field contains a 5-digit ZIP code.

### **COBOL Picture:**

X(05)

### **Possible Values:**

Numeric

### **Example:**

12345

## **ZIP+4-Input**

The ZIP+4-INPUT field contains a ZIP add-on code that describes the last four positions of a ZIP+4 Code. This field may be equal to blanks, indicating a non-ZIP+4 codeable record.

### **COBOL Picture:**

X(04)

### **Possible Values:**

Alphanumeric

### **Example:**

0001 through 9999 or spaces

## LOT Stage Files

LOT Stage I products files are provided to assist in evaluating and diagnosing the performance of software developed to perform LOT sequencing and carrier route assignment. Input fields and answer fields are provided on the Stage I file for comparison purposes. In some cases, spaces may be provided in an answer field indicating the Stage I input is invalid.

***Note:** Stage I results will not be evaluated by the NCSC and have no bearing on certification. LOT Stage I processing is not required as part of the certification process; it is only provided as a diagnostic tool.*

LOT Stage II product files are provided to demonstrate the ability of software to properly assign the correct carrier-route ID, LOT sequence number, and ascending/descending code for any valid ZIP+4 code to qualify for applicable carrier route postal rates. Software must move the correct answers to the answer position on the Stage II file in LOT so the Certification Department at the NCSC can evaluate the results. *Achieving a score of 100% accuracy on the LOT product being tested results in LOT certification for that product.*

### Copy the LOT Stage I File

Before processing the LOT Stage I product file, be sure to make a backup copy and store the original Stage file in a safe place. *Do not process the original LOT Stage I file.* Depending upon the type of software used, processing the original file could overwrite the general answer information provided or cause the loss of all data.

Using the backup copy, additional copies can be made to process. Answer elements may be deleted prior to processing, and answers or sortation may be compared against the initial backup copy.

The Stage I file is provided as an evaluation and diagnostic tool. Use of this tool is at the discretion of the customer. When software analysis is completed, please return the original LOT Stage I file to the NCSC at the following address along with your name, company name, address and telephone number:

LOT CERTIFICATION  
NATIONAL CUSTOMER SUPPORT CENTER  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE  
6060 PRIMACY PKWY STE 101  
MEMPHIS TN 38188-0001

### Process the *Original* LOT Stage II File

Process the original Stage II product file through the software to be certified. If the original LOT Stage II file cannot be processed, a new LOT Stage II must be ordered. **Do not process a backup copy of the LOT Stage II file.** The NCSC will only accept the original LOT Stage II file for evaluation.

Processed Stage II files must be received by the NCSC within ten calendar days from the date of receipt, or the certification attempt is void. The original LOT Stage II product file must always be returned on the original media and must have the color label that was enclosed in the original Stage II file package affixed to it. Only the LOT Stage II file with the affixed label will be evaluated (diskette files do not receive color labels). When the Stage II file has been evaluated, the results will be reported.

Please return the processed LOT Stage II file to the address on page 9 with your name, company name, address and telephone number. All Stage II files returned for evaluation become the property of the United States Postal Service.

***Note:** LOT Stage files must be returned via the United States Postal Service. Stage files returned by any other commercial carrier will be rejected.*

## Grading, Scoring and Certification

Grading, scoring and certification analysis are performed on LOT Stage II files only. Answer fields in the Stage II file will be evaluated and will be deemed correct or incorrect on the basis of the answer elements provided. Input ZIP+4 records that do not match to the LOT file must be brought to the top of the file and assigned a sequence number of all zeros, with a descending flag in the answer field. If the input record does not contain an add-on code, these records must be deleted to be graded as correct. These records cannot be matched to the Address Information Systems (AIS) LOT product.

The grading process provides reports containing statistical information on scoring and detailed analysis of problem areas. A 100% score is required to achieve LOT certification.

When the required score for certification is achieved, the software product used to process the test file is certified. Certification consists of issuing an official notification letter, a LOT certificate, and a Grading Output Analysis Report package. Your company name is then included in a list of certified companies that can be ordered from the Customer Service Department at the NCSC.

## Ordering LOT Stage Files

Enter all information on the order form exactly as it should appear in any USPS publication. If you do not want your company's name to appear in Postal Service publications, please check the appropriate box on the order form. Specify the type of certification sought: manufacturer or user-defined. A company official must sign and date the CASS order form.

## Media Configuration

The desired media configuration for the LOT certification product ordered must be specified by completing the appropriate box on the order form using the Media Configuration Table. Make only one selection.

## Software

The software name, version, and configuration must be provided for the software to be tested. The configuration consists of a three-character alphabetic field that identifies the parameter settings used by the software processing the LOT Stage II file.

## Stage Files

Stage I and Stage II product files may be ordered individually or at the same time. Stage I is optional (but recommended) prior to attempting certification. Stage II is required, and the Stage II file must be processed and returned to the NCSC within ten calendar days from the date of receipt.

***Note:** For assistance in ordering the LOT certification product, call the CASS Department at (800) 681-4440.*

## **Stage II Processing Quick Reference**

### **Processing Steps**

1. Complete the order form and mail or fax it to the NCSC Certification Department.
  - No orders are accepted verbally over the phone.
  - Orders must be signed and dated by a company official.
  - If the software has optional parameter settings, configuration designators indicating the settings to be used when processing customer and /or client address files must be provided.
2. Process the LOT Stage II file through the software to be certified.
  - Set software parameters exactly as processing a customer or internal address file.
  - Process the original Stage II file. Backup copies or alternate media will be rejected.
  - Update the appropriate fields in the Stage II for NCSC evaluation.
  - Attach the colored tape label provided to the completed Stage II media (unless media is diskette).
3. Mail the completed Stage II file to the National Customer Support Center for evaluation.
4. Certification results will be returned when the evaluation is complete.

### **Helpful Hints**

1. Always attempt to read the processed Stage II file before returning it to the NCSC for evaluation to ensure that there are no physical problems with the media and to verify the number of records.
2. Verify that the file is configured (block size, record length, BPI) exactly requested.

## LINE OF TRAVEL (LOT)

### Customer Information (Required)

Attention: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP+4: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ FAX Number: ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

### Mailing Information (if different from above)

Attention: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP+4: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ FAX Number: ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

I request that my certification be maintained in US Postal Service documents and records as: (Select **one**.)

☐ Integrator/Manufacturer

☐ Vendor/Service Bureau

☐ I do not wish to be listed in  
any postal publications

☐ NCOA Licensee

☐ DSF Licensee

☐ User

I am applying for:

☐ Manufacturer Certification (*Software/Hardware*)

☐ User-Defined Certification

All information furnished on this application is complete and correct. The responses provided on the LOT Stage II certification file will be obtained using the same configuration used for processing customer/client address files. Any modification to the software or the configuration used to process the Stage II file will require recertification prior to use or release. The LOT Stage II file will be processed in-house with company-owned or leased software/hardware. All answers will be written to the Stage II file via batch processing without manual intervention. Users of this software are advised that any modification voids LOT certification.

I have read and understand the requirements above and realize that any misrepresentation or failure to comply with these requirements will result in decertification.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Company Official's Signature (Required)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (*please print*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### NCSC USE ONLY

**Customer #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **PRDT Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Product Information

(Required)

If the matching software/hardware has optional parameters, a list of the parameters that will be used to process the LOT Stage II file **MUST** be returned with this form. A facsimile of PS Form 3553 **MUST** be returned with the Stage II certification file/test deck.

## Line Of Travel (LOT) Software

1. Specify Stage type:

☐ Stage I

☐ Stage II

☐ Both

2. Electronic reports *(defaults to full if neither selected)*:

☐ Full

☐ Partial

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Media configuration *(please choose from media configuration table at bottom of form)*:

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Software product name

Version #

Configuration

## Media Configurations Table

Code	Description	Code	Description
A	Tape 6250 BPI EBCDIC	E	Cartridge IBM 3480 38K
B	Tape 6250 BPI ASCII	F	Diskette 1.2 MB IBM 5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub>
C	Tape 1600 BPI EBCDIC	G	Diskette 1.44 MB IBM 3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>
D	Tape 1600 BPI ASCII		

## Return This Form To

LOT CERTIFICATION  
NATIONAL CUSTOMER SUPPORT CENTER  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE  
6060 PRIMACY PKWY STE 101  
MEMPHIS TN 38188-0001  
(800) 681-4440